

Second Body

Florin Flueraș

First Body

Since the end of the 60s it was clear for many people all over the world that it is not enough to try to oppose the economic-political order. The problem is not just about how to bring more bodies into the streets to fight the power and the obvious problems, but also about what kind of life powers those bodies. The bodies of the protesters and that of the rulers are not that different - in spite of the racial, sexual and class differences, at certain levels we share a degree of rigidity and limitations in our bodies, life capacities and potentiality. Intuitively, a lot of what happened at the end of the 60s was very much about addressing this situation, and about an liberation of the body from racial, sexual and disciplinary constraints. Since then it was a lot of talk about capitalism that constructs our minds and bodies, about an imperative to follow our desires and to bring freedom to the body. And some experimentation with common living, sexuality, psychotropic substances and everything that can be done to bring freedom of the mind and body.

A good example for this attitude was the passing from a disciplinary regime to a sort of expressive regime of the body in the dance of that period. Improvisation was the keyword and everything seemed to be possible, the body freed from the classical and modern dance discipline could finally express itself. The enthusiasm and the joy of the freedom lasted for a while but, after years and years of self-expression, a depressive moment arrived when the realization that there is no 'itself' to express couldn't be postponed. The 'authentic movements' and the expressions of the 'freedom of the body' started to appear just as a bunch of clichés, stereotypes and patterns of movements - recombined remains from the trashed disciplinary dances. The same happened also with the less dancing bodies - our bodies of the post-disciplinary, control society are the expression of automatisms and habits from the previously disciplinary and older power regimes. Old and new commands are embodied and expressed in our free movements and behaviors.

The free body - obtained through hard experimentation with all kinds of substances, all kinds of sexuality and all sorts of techniques of freeing ourselves - got exhausted and turned up not that free after all. The joy and the sensation of freedom felt from getting out of the disciplined body was quickly consumed. Soon the party was over and hangover lasted many years after Woodstock. Woodstock is also good example of how the freedom of the body was transformed into a spectacle, a representation of freedom largely consumed. After that, the capturing and instrumentation of this 'free' and self-expressive body continues and becomes central to a new economy in which sensibility, intuition, affectability, creativity and other capacities are put to work. 'Express yourself' seems to be the urge nowadays and Facebook is just an example. There is an opening for the consume of more experiences but this kind of liberation does not produce a new body, it is just letting the old body express itself.

Silvia Federici considers that this body that we want to liberate is actually a machine whose construction was necessary for capitalism to appear and develop: "the human body and not the steam engine, and not even the clock, was the first machine developed by capitalism".(1) This body-machine was built with the help of philosophers like Descartes and Hobbes who were also engaged in another necessary project - the annihilation of a more open and sensible body that was present in that period: "What died was the concept of the body as a receptacle of magical powers that had prevailed in the medieval world. In reality, it was destroyed. For in the background of the new philosophy we find a vast initiative by the state, whereby what the philosophers classified as 'irrational' was branded as crime. ... In Descartes, the reduction of the body to mechanical matter allows for the development of mechanisms of self-management that make the body the subject of the will. In Hobbes, by contrast, the mechanization of the body justifies the total submission of the individual to the power of the state. In both, however, the outcome is a redefinition of bodily attributes that makes the body, ideally, at least, suited for the regularity and automatism demanded by the capitalist work-discipline."

There are anthropologists who are seeing this mechanization and radically materialist thinking as

"the product of a Western epistemology extending as far back as Aristotle's starkly biological view of the human soul in *De Anima*".(2) We can also easily trace back the premises for 'our' tool-body to the moment when the agriculture and the instrumentalization of nature started. A lot of (self)organization was needed, a good occasion for discipline, centralization and dominance to be deployed on the closest nature - the 'own body' and the rest of nature. As a result we have a master - slave relation with 'our body' in which the body habits, patterns, capacities are reduced to what is economically useful as well as a life and world organized around capturing and predation.

The 60s effort of setting free this tool-body was not enough because, similarly to what happened when this was tried in dance, what remains after the 'liberation' are just stereotypes and clichés. Our bodies are shaped by our type of culture, nature, society, economy, politics, especially in the unconscious layers, in the unknown - at the level of reflexes, habits, perception automatisms, affective circuits, etc. It's not enough to deconstruct or to apply critical thinking to the tool-body or to the world. You need to reconstruct the body and that's a different kind of work. On the other hand we need this tool-body too because it is what we have for navigating this world.

Second Body

The familiar habits and patterns of perception and movement are silencing all the inhuman factors in the body. "One instinctually arranges one's life so that the tasks, the tools and the problems and the encounters will recur the same each day, one avoids the limits".(3) In this way the first body constantly confirms the world and its behaviours, the first body always encounters a known, stabilized world. The quantity of known is constantly expanding until it becomes the totality of perception, until we actually perfectly know what a body can do and what a body is. Our bodies are impregnated with a biological conception, there is a scientific knowledge that we put automatically into bodies and objects. We just know that they are made of molecules and atoms not of affects, spirits, or something similar and we take for granted that a body cannot be in two locations at the same time.

Even if this seems a very solid, grounded reality, there are spaces where this scientific, materialist thinking is just an impotent fiction. It is possible that an Amazonian continues the end of the last paragraph about the impossibility of the same body to be in two locations at the same time by saying: "maybe not so much in Europe but in Amazonia it can". This is multinaturalism, one important feature of Viveiros de Castro's perspectivism "a radically objective diversity. One single culture multiple natures".(4) There are multiple natures, different worlds, not an objective reality perceived and interpreted differently in each culture. Viveiros de Castro was aware that in this kind of worlds a dematerialization of the body and of the thinking was necessary: "What I call 'body' is not a synonym with a distinct substance or fixed shape; it is an assemblage of affects or ways of being that constitutes a habitus". This type of Amazonian material, says Aparecida Vilaça, will allow us to discern a body that is not impregnated with a biological conception, "a body whose existence is fleeting and whose reality lies in the eyes of others".(5)

For a non-scientific organized perception even a shadow can have the consistency of a body and it is much more than an optical effect. For some Amazonian populations the objects or subjectivities that a person incorporates are immediately replicated by that person's shadow.(6) Vilaça noticed that many Amazonians use the same word for shadow, soul, traces left by the body, vital principle - because "the soul is actualized as a body in another world, very often conceived as a world in negative, exactly like that of the shadow".(5) According to Carlos Castaneda this world in negative should be cultivated through 'not-doing' which consists of "a perceptual game of focusing attention on features of the world that were ordinarily overlooked, such as the shadows of things".(7)

For the new sorcerers described by Castaneda this not-doing together with other knowledge and practices are necessary for producing a double, a strange second body. The Body without Organs seems to be related with this world in negative too, and also with the shadow and night - Artaud wanted to build it by 'dilatating' the body of the 'internal night'. And similarly to some Amazonians and the new sorcerers of Castaneda, he didn't wanted to destroy his own 'paralyzed

body', the organic body the body object of biology, medicine, hygiene, and so on, what he wanted to do was to rebuild or discover 'another automaton' that would generate itself by the "following forces, flows, and time, another time".(8)

We don't know how to produce this kind of a second body or how to work with the shadows or with the external and internal night, but exactly this impossibility can be the starting point, the unknown can become a procedure - 'I don't know' as the constantly present premise. In Real Time Composition (a practice initiated by João Fiadeiro in the field of contemporary dance) an important aspect is to resist the first decision, the first impulse for acting in a certain situation and to wait for a 'second wave', a second inspiration. The first wave options are coming from the habitus, from the automaton body, the second wave, if you learn to recognize it, brings a response that is connected to the newness of the situation and brings presence.

By inserting a tendency to resist the need of manipulating yourself according to what you know, to your evaluation and judgment of the situation, a non envisioned second possibility appears. If at the level of our micro-movements and micro-decisions a small space or a small delay is inserted and a bit of unknowing can occur, then the known retreats a step back, a potentiality for something else to take over appears and this can be felt as newness, as presence. In some zones of contemporary dance the concept of 'presence' is very important. Presence happens when the performer is sensible and she connects with an unknown second reality. And, because that reality is not personal and sometimes not even human, somehow this act of being sensible affects the audience too and the black box of the theater becomes magical.

If the worlds and the natures are organized around habits it is not possible to produce other world and other body through simple acts of volition nor just through theoretical approaches. A new body should be created by cristalizing new behaviors, thoughts and affects in new habits. The first body cannot and does not have to be annihilated or replaced, what we can do is to grow a second body by diverting attention from the known body and feeding the unknown. Instead of changing ourselves and developing new practices, we can add layers of unknown to what we already do, by adding a second nature, second intentions, shadow attention, shadow processes and activities to the everyday behaviours, to the first reality. What could take over is an inverted, negative, shadow attention.

The first body is constituted around an attention which creates the body as an image, as an instrument, as a body schema coordinated from the center of control. It is a spectacle attention which is searching for objects to exploit, an attention which perceives the environment as separate, as something to conquer and dominate. This spectacle attention is stretched to the maximum nowadays and accelerates all the incapacities of the first body, especially the incapacity to affect and to be affected.(9) Presenteeism according to Peter Fleming can be a form of strike from the first world and first attention: "Presenteeism is where you turn up to your job but you just sit there and you're vacant and you go through the motions and you do the bare minimum and wish you were somewhere else".(10) The distance, distrust for the first attention is difficult to produce in our world but it is a necessary ambience for a second attention to develop.

The second attention can grow like a parallel layer added to the everyday behaviors. For instance: in this moment my body is engaged in writing this text not only in typing it but also in the production of the text, all the organs and functions involved in the act of speaking are also active in thinking and writing. And now your body is engaged in reading what I write. Both our activities intensify the principle of a mind organizing and commanding the body. But concomitant to this executive flow there is a second, affective flow that comes from the body, which is usually silenced. While you are reading this a second attention can be added by feeling the information that comes from the posture, small movements, expression of the face and the atmosphere around them.

The second attention changes the perception of things in proximity or even at distance. By registering this 'internal' affectivity a small sensible feeling between yourself and the forms of life and objects around you can appear. In this way a second perception, a non interpretative one is added, one that is related with a direct sensibility. A reversed attention for which the shadows become more important than the features of the world. A second attention that reverses the first

attention and comes from periphery, it goes from body to mind. It is not so much oriented towards domination as around sensibility. It is not about sending commands to the body but more about receiving affectivity from the form of the body. This is an opening attention, an attention that is not so much an attack upon the environment anymore.

Tom Sparrow, following Strauss, calls this affective attention an “alingual animal intelligibility” - “a type of intelligibility nascent in sensibility, an intelligibility that is affective before it is intelligible and vital before it is rational. It is a pre-rational intelligence that we humans share with the other fleshy beings”.⁽¹¹⁾ This sensibility connects us to what Massumi calls the ‘non-human strata’ that are integrated in the human body⁽¹²⁾ and to what a ‘radically open’ body absorbs from the context, environment in which it moves⁽¹³⁾. Towards a general bioaffection, a general sensibility and empathy between living organisms are pointing also the studies on ‘primary perception’ in plant life by Cleve Backster.⁽¹⁴⁾ Maybe there is a general communication or circulation that forms of life are sharing or even the ‘inorganic beings’ if we listen to the new sorcerers described by Castaneda who are placing affectability in the inorganic world as well, by speaking of inorganic entities “with awareness, but no life as we understand life”⁽¹⁵⁾.

The main technique for lucid dreaming and for out of body experiences is to become aware of your body or a part of your body while asleep. This creates a strange feedback loop which initiates awareness and intensifies the presence in the ‘dream world’. By making the dreams real or by becoming real in the dream the ‘dreaming body’ appears. This kind of body-attention is an interesting way of creating a body and probably there is a key here about how the first body is constituted, and about how the second body can be created. Maybe by deviating a certain amount of attention, of affection, of energy from the first body and the first world in the direction of an intensification of the Unknown, a second attention and a second body can appear, in the same way that, by deviating attention from the dream activity, a dreaming body appears. Maybe by stabilizing this second attention, and by making it a habit, a second body and other worlds can acquire some consistency.

For Deleuze and Guattari “the concept is the contour, the configuration, the constellation of an event to come”⁽¹⁶⁾. Second Body can function as a sort of attractor that maybe at a certain point can shake the complete identification with the first body. Second Body as a concept is necessary for a partial coagulation, stabilization and configuration of affects, ideas, practices and habits that arise around the shadow attention. Second Body is a concept but it can be also an concrete unvisual, ungrounded, unknown body, a second nature or even the body that flies in your dreams. Second Body is not so much about what exists or what is possible, or about what you can comprehend or validate, Second Body is not a body that you have, it is rather a body that has you, it is a occasion through which the unknown can abduct you.

1 Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*

2 Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Margaret Lock, *The Mindful Body*

3 Alfonso Lingis quoted in Tom Sparrow, *Bodies in Transit*

4 Viveiros de Castro, *Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism*

5 Aparecida Vilaça, *Chronically Unstable Bodies: Reflections on Amazonian Corporalities*

6 Fernando Santos-Granero, *Beinghood and people-making in native Amazonia*

7 Carlos Castaneda, *Tales of Power*

8 Kuniichi Uno, *The Genesis of an Unknown Body*

9 Florin Flueraș, *We are all Reptilians Now*

10 Peter Fleming interviewed by Jennifer Martin, *Working Stiffs*

11 Tom Sparrow, *Bodies in Transit*

12 Brian Massumi, *Like a thought*

13 Brian Massumi, *The Autonomy of Affect*

14 Cleve Backster, *Evidence of a Primary Perception in Plant Life*

15 Carlos Castaneda, *Power of Silence*

16 Giles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, *What is philosophy?*